

Strait of Juan de Fuca Community Conversation

March 7, 2008

Community Conversation Summary

Meeting Purpose

The Puget Sound Partnership held a community conversation in Sequim on March 5, 2008, and invited the public to share their comments and concerns about protecting and restoring Puget Sound. This public event provided citizens an overview of the Puget Sound Partnership and the Action Agenda process, reviewed highlights from the afternoon workshop discussion, and concluded with an open community discussion.

Meeting Overview

Approximately 20 people attended the community conversation from 5:30-7:30 p.m. in Sequim.

Meeting Summary

Steve Tharinger, Clallam County Commissioner and Ecosystem Coordination Board member, welcomed everyone and introduced Chris Townsend, Special Assistant to the Executive Director of the Puget Sound Partnership. Chris gave an overview of the state of Puget Sound, the structure of the Partnership, and a brief introduction to the Action Agenda. He also presented highlights from the afternoon workshop discussions and gave an overview of the next steps including meeting summaries, topic forums, and the next set of public meetings.

Chris opened up the discussion for general comments, questions and concerns.

The following is a list of questions and comments heard following the presentations. Answers from Partnership staff are indicated with italics.

What do you value about the Puget Sound?

- Shorebirds
- Wildlife—bald eagle sightings are common
- The ecosystem is something bigger than we are
- I have a personal love of the stream on my property
- The interconnectedness
- Family heritage

- Steelhead fishing
- The percentage of people who live here, care about the area and appreciate it. People are working on the issues. It's invigorating.

What concerns you about the future of Puget Sound? What are the biggest problems?

- Thousands of birds die every time there is an oil spill. We just lost the tugboat in Neah Bay that helps prevent the tankers from having spills. These things need to be funded.
- I think the main issue is human nature and our natural reluctance to change. The things we're accustomed to doing are not going to be possible in the next generation.
- The Partnership needs to gain the goodwill of large property owners. There is a great deal of animosity between large property owners and regulators. I would suggest a Partnership working group out in the field educating these land owners. They own critical areas and they can help us in this effort.
- Air quality issues are a big problem. The water is affected by the air and it's not just the air from this area. We may not be able to fix our problems with any amount of money because many of the problems begin in areas far away. *This has been brought up in other areas, too. We know that air quality is very important.*
- I'm concerned about population growth. There is going to be a huge conversion of agricultural land and open space to rooftops and impervious surfaces. Waterfront property owners should think about the consequences of building too close to the waters edge.

What criteria are most important to prioritize action, programs and next steps?

- It is cost effective.
- It has a low risk for failure.
- It is beneficial to multiple action areas or multiple goals.
- It has a public outreach element.
- It has positive impacts on local employment.

- It would provide wide exposure for the Partnership.
- It has a win-win benefit - environmentally, economically and socially.

Do you have suggestions for changing human behavior?

- You need a reward or incentive, such as a tax break. People need a reason to choose more expensive, environmentally-friendly options. Many developers are choosing to build single-family homes as well as denser, environmentally-friendly homes in the same project. This also gives them an economic benefit.
- There needs to be some short-term strategies to make these choices affordable to everyone. I've seen groups buying options and state subsidies as options.
- In Everett, the state subsidized extra insulation at one time. *We could do the water equivalent and give coupons to septic owners for 'green' laundry detergent.*
- I heard that in Seattle, there is a program for recycling building materials when they tear a house down. Could we start a "Craig's list" [on-line community forum] for reused materials in this area?
- Washington used to give incentives for recycling plastic bottles. Now, there are bottles littered everywhere.
- Golf courses are a hotbed of chemicals; we could create golf course incentives. Someone could supply them with all-natural supplies at a low cost.

Steve Tharinger, ECB, posed this question to the group: "The quality of life and human health aspect of the Action Agenda is new. When you hear that, what comes to mind? How would you characterize human health and quality of life?"

- Contaminated food
- Smog
- Drinkable water
- Aesthetics
- Waterborne illness
- Shellfish

- Pathogens in the water
- Pharmaceuticals in the water

If there was one place in this action area that you could protect or restore by 2009, what would that be?

- Dungeness River
- Rayonier Mill Site
- Hoko River System
- The Partnership should come up with demonstration grants for jurisdictions to implement stormwater plans.
- It would be nice to see the Elwha River cleaned by 2012; the date keeps getting pushed back.
- Technical assistance for land owners who want to do the right thing.

General comments:

- Everyone has a different baseline for the Sound depending on how long they've lived here. We need to convey what we've lost already, the original baseline, through education and outreach.
- Have there ever been studies on the decline of shorebirds and the association with the decline in steelhead? *We know there have been changes in shorebird habitat and Spartina growth where the shorebirds were eating. I think there is an indication that the shorebirds may have higher toxics in their systems but I don't know if it is parallel to the decline of steelhead.*
- Education and outreach is really important. I would like to learn more about the organizations in the Straits inventory form summary. *We need to communicate with people and explain what those inventory forms mean.*
- I often see things about the Sound in the media but it doesn't seem like there is a huge problem. I think the media is getting a different message and we need to make sure that they are passing on the correct message to people.

- We're losing options every day as land is transformed. Improper building codes and stormwater management, poor regulation and inadequate education are leading to environmentally-degrading development. We need to inform people.
- I've heard it will take up to 27 billion dollars to restore and protect Puget Sound. If we invest the money, we need to take into account the things we don't have control over, like climate change. *Good point. We need achievable goals. We can't make nature do things differently. We need to carefully choose our objectives and cooperate with nature.*
- Another incentive option could be to require developers to pay for the right to build in certain areas, and then receive an incentive to build on a bus line.
- Encourage or require biodiesel in all engines – ships, cars, trains.
- The conceptual model shown does not include the ocean shoreline, it's too focused on streams.
- Education has a huge impact. I have an environmental festival in September that attracts 1,000 people to Port Angeles. Can you help me organize this event that I already do instead of reinventing the wheel?
- You should use the media to promote state programs. Television is the key; more people are already watching television. People are more involved in the environment in this area but they need direction. *With your support, this is what we can do. Fill out an inventory form if you have specific programs.*
- This is very "doom and gloom." We need a little more positive outreach, focus on what IS working so that we're not always faced with negative information. *We did hear this afternoon that some local anecdotes would be helpful.*
- Almost every community on the water has some sort of aquarium that is underutilized, usually because of a shortage of funds. You should channel some funds there and then make sure all the kids have to go there at some time throughout the year. If the kids are on board, it will help get the parents on board.
- We should tap into science programs in schools.

- I think public television stations require a certain number of public service announcements. You should utilize television and get in front of people where they already are.
- You should have a booth at the local farmers' markets.
- Volunteers are an incredible resource for monitoring.
- We need to involve kids through education and outreach. We should be in their media classes and their GIS classes.
- We need to celebrate successes that have already happened locally. We need a hopeful perspective. If you feature local stories, you'll get people on board.
- You need to bring out the individual uniqueness of the action area. Write a local article for the media.
- We need to look ahead. Everyone was excited about the compact fluorescent light bulbs and now we have mercury issues. Why didn't we think of that when we started?
- At future meetings, can you provide real-world quantities or examples that help the public understand the scale and scope of a problem? Some of us aren't as involved on a day to day basis so we don't understand the scale of the various problems. *Yes, thank you for the suggestion.*
- We need to celebrate successes that have already taken place. A lot has been done since the 1970 Clean Water Act. In some deep sediments of Puget Sound and in certain organics, you can tell that things are improving. Let's celebrate but also move forward to do more.
- How can we access help? What do we do?
Your regional liaison is a great resource, and each action area has a designated liaison you can work with to share your ideas and requests. [Insert John's contact info here?]

Wrap-up/Next Steps

Chris Townsend thanked everyone for coming and encouraged attendees to send him their local stories. He said the Puget Sound Partnership is holding other workshops and outreach events around the Sound. Please contact the Partnership with your comments via the Web site: www.psp.wa.gov.